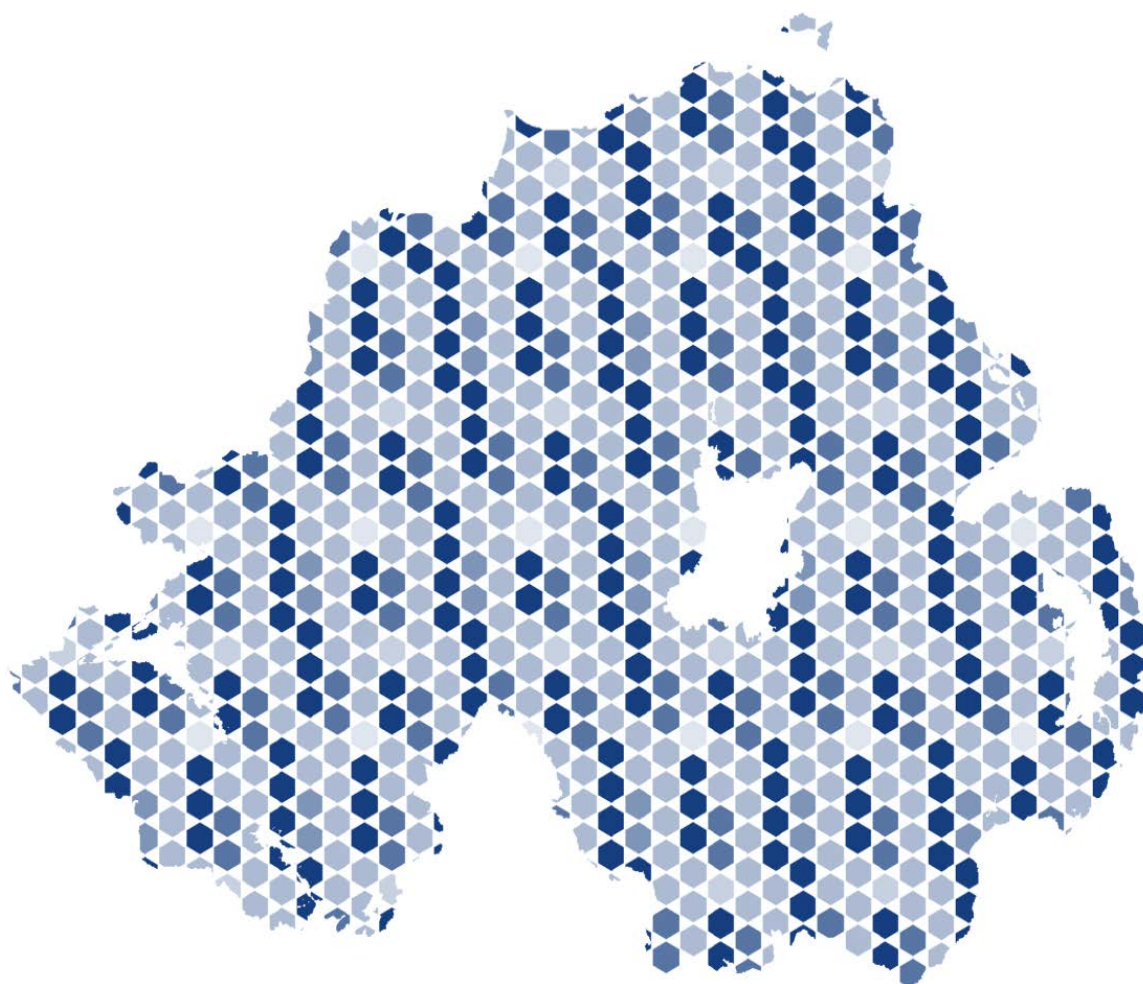


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mark's High School,
Warrenpoint, County Down

Maintained, co-educational, 11-19, non-selective school

Report of an Inspection in
April 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities



Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation, data and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Six percent of parents (41) and 54% of staff (50) responded to the online questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. The written comments affirmed, in particular, the supportive learning environment provided for the pupils and the development of their personal, social and emotional skills. The responses to the staff questionnaires were also very positive, highlighting the school's inclusive ethos, the high standards set for the pupils' learning and the very good opportunities available for the staff to develop further their professional competence and expertise. The very few issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and governors.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

In addition to the focus on English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, there was a supplementary subject focus on information and communication technology (ICT) in this inspection.

3. Context

St Mark's High School, situated in the town of Warrenpoint, is a maintained, co-educational, non-selective school for 11-19 year old pupils. The school has an education centre for the physically disabled, which caters for pupils with additional physical needs. The school draws most of its pupils from the Warrenpoint area and the remainder come from the surrounding rural areas. The enrolment has remained steady over the last four years.

The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased significantly over the last two years to almost 40%. Over the last three years, one-third of the pupils have required additional support with some aspects of their learning.

St Mark's High School is an active participant of the Newry and Mourne Area Learning Community. The school has achieved a range of awards and accreditations, including Investors in People Bronze Award, ECO Schools and the Gold Mark for sport. A school enhancement building programme is currently under way at the school, including an extension and refurbishment, which is due for completion in September 2016.

Name School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Year 8 Intake	137	139	134	139
Enrolment	889	881	851	851
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.6% (91.3%)	93.4% (92.0%)	93.3% (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	28%	29%	39%	39%
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	35% (313)	36% (314)	36% (309)	36% (305)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	61	62	53	54
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the Educational Centre for pupils with a Physical Disability	9	8	7	8
No. of newcomers	24	29	29	39
<i>Intake²:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	3	1	#	#
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	7	2	#	#
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	68	56	#	#
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	69	52	#	#

Source: data as held by the school.

N/A not available

data unavailable due to industrial action in some primary schools

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Effectiveness Conclusion	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very Good
Provision for learning	Very Good
Leadership and management	Very Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils are considerate and polite in their engagement with each other and with the adults in school. They are well motivated and, as they progress through the school, become increasingly confident, resilient and ambitious learners. The pupils' learning experiences are enhanced well through the varied extra-curricular programme that supports the further development of their personal and social skills. They have a strong sense of pride in, and loyalty to, their school.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals

² From 2013, KS2 standards in English and mathematics are reported as Levels of Progression in Communication and Using Mathematics and cannot be compared directly with KS2 data from previous years

- The pupils achieve very well in public examinations. At key stage (KS) 4 , in two out of the last three years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C has been well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band. When English and mathematics are included, the percentage of pupils attaining at grades A* to C at GCSE or equivalent has also been well above the NI average for similar schools. There was a significant dip in the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C in 2015.
- At post-16, the percentage of pupils achieving three or more GCE A level examinations at grades A* to C has been consistently well above the NI average for non-selective schools over the last three years. In addition, the standards the pupils achieve in vocational subjects at KS 4 and post-16 are very good.
- In two out of the last three years, the attainment by pupils entitled to free school meals of five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been well above the NI average.
- The pupils, who require additional support with aspects of their learning, including those who attend the education centre for physically disabled, attain well and follow suitable curriculum pathways and accredited courses that enable them to progress to further education, higher education, training or employment.
- The percentage of pupils progressing to higher education courses is in line with the NI average for similar schools. The number of pupils progressing from year 12 to year 13 is below the NI average, due to the fact that the pupils are selecting appropriate alternative pathways beyond the school. There is a high progression rate from year 13 to year 14. In 2015, all of the year 13 pupils returned to year 14 studies.
- The standards attained by the pupils in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are very good.
- In mathematics, the three year average for at GCSE level is significantly above the NI average for similar schools. The standard of work in the pupils' books is of a high quality. The pupils enjoy and engage well in mathematics lessons; they are precise and thorough in their method and they work well independently, in groups and pairs. While the number of pupils entered for GCE A level mathematics is small, over the last three years, most of the pupils achieved at grades A* to C.
- In English, the percentage of pupils attaining at GCSE grades A* to C over the last three years is significantly above the NI average for similar schools. A small number of pupils also achieve very well in GCSE English literature. The percentage of pupils attaining at grades A* to C in GCE A level English literature has been well below the NI average in two of the last three years.
- In ICT, over the last three years, the standards attained by the pupils in public examinations at GCSE level or equivalent at grades A* to C are well above the NI average for similar non-selective schools. At GCE A level, over the same period, the pupils attain above the NI subject average at grades A* to C and A* to E. The significant numbers of pupils undertaking examination ICT subjects develop and apply high-level ICT skills, along with important transferable skills such as analytical, evaluation, project management and problem-solving skills.

6. Provision for learning

- Most (88%) of the lessons observed during the inspection were effective (good or better) in promoting and progressing the pupils' learning; just under one-half (46%) of them were very effective. In the most effective lessons, the pupils are enabled to be independent in their learning and the tasks set are challenging but achievable. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils and use a wide range of effective teaching strategies in order to progress learning, which result in the pupils achieving very good outcomes.
- In the less effective practice (important areas for improvement) in a minority (11%) of the lessons observed, there is over-direction by the teachers and insufficient consolidation of the pupils' learning.
- The provision for learning in English is very good. The pupils interact confidently in paired and group work and in the most effective practice are given opportunities to express their ideas and opinions using increasingly ambitious vocabulary and thinking skills. The teachers need to review the planning for learning, in particular at KS 3, to focus more explicitly on the further development of the pupils' inferential and analytical skills.
- The school is committed to promoting literacy across the curriculum. The whole-school focus on raising standards in literacy is appropriate with the majority of teachers creating literacy rich environments which are contributing positively to improving the quality of the pupils' writing. There are effective literacy programmes to support targeted pupils in the development of their reading skills; almost all of these pupils make very good progress.
- The provision for learning in mathematics is good. There is a calm, orderly learning environment in the mathematics lessons. In the effective practice, in almost all of the mathematics lessons observed, a wide range of assessment for learning strategies and skilful questioning are used appropriately to evaluate the level of understanding and to extend the pupils' thinking. The high standard of marking and follow-through of the pupils' corrections is used effectively to inform planning. The teachers have appropriately prioritised the need to develop further opportunities for flexible thinking, challenge and broader application of the pupils' mathematical skills.
- There is a well informed approach to the development of numeracy across the curriculum. The pupils benefit from opportunities to apply and develop their numeracy skills through well planned connected learning activities, a range of mathematics-related competitions and the celebration of numeracy week. Appropriate numeracy intervention programmes are effective in progressing the learning of targeted groups of pupils. The school has appropriately identified the need to further monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of the numeracy provision across the curriculum, in order to ensure its consistency and effectiveness in improving the standards attained by the pupils.

- The provision for learning in ICT is very good. High expectations permeate all aspects of the work of the department, with strong support and encouragement provided for the pupils. Planning for learning is consistently very good. The quality of the learning and teaching observed was always good or better; one-half of the lessons observed were very good. The pupils' progress in learning is systematically tracked, target-setting is embedded and effective intervention is undertaken as necessary.
- At KS 3, along with the timetabled ICT classes the pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop their skills in an appropriate range of contemporary applications, and to extend their learning through the use of ICT across a range of subjects. The school is well placed to assess the cross-curricular ICT skills acquired and applied by the pupils. The further development of cross-curricular ICT is afforded a high strategic priority, underpinned by relevant action planning. The use of the school's virtual learning environment to enhance learning is underdeveloped and the pupils' learning would benefit from additional technology enhanced learning opportunities.
- The curriculum at KS 3 is suitably broad and balanced. It is characterised by well considered and connected cross-curricular projects that underpin the school's appropriate focus on developing the pupils' personal capabilities. In addition, there is a comprehensive programme of STEM-related learning and enrichment activities that are used to good effect to develop the pupils' problem-solving and creativity skills. The curriculum offer at KS 4 and post-16 meets the requirements of the entitlement framework. The school's pro-active participation in the area learning community ensures that the curriculum planning is dynamic, reflects employment trends and is responsive to the needs of the pupils. Effective partnerships with other schools and the local further education college contribute well to a broadening and sustainable post-16 provision, that enables the pupils to access successfully, relevant progression routes.
- The very good provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is afforded a high priority at whole-school level. Comprehensive self-evaluation informs planning and staff development, building well the school's capacity to deliver high quality careers provision for the pupils. An effective taught programme of careers education develops well the pupils' understanding of the world of work, enabling them to make informed decisions at key transition points. A significant programme of enrichment activities, that include guest speakers, relevant work-experience at years 11 and 13, a careers fair and mock interviews effectively supports the pupils in their personal career planning.
- The care and support for the pupils is highly effective, with the pastoral care of the pupils being a significant strength of the provision. Throughout the school, there is a strong focus on inclusion and a genuine sense of community spirit; this is particularly evident in the respectful interchange between the pupils in the education centre for physically disabled and the main school. Within this highly inclusive, supportive ethos the pupils have valuable experiences to develop well their interpersonal skills. Through the effective healthy lifestyle forum, student leadership team and the student council, the pupils undertake purposeful leadership roles, enrich their learning experiences and contribute meaningfully to the improvement of their school. As a result, the pupils are well equipped to progress successfully to the next stage in their learning or into employment.

- The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are integrated fully into the life of the school. The school is informed well about their individual strengths and interests and is responsive to their needs. There is very good engagement with an extensive network of external agencies to support and meet their wide-ranging and changing needs. The teachers work collegially to set and review the targets in the pupils' individual education plans and in the most effective practice, subject-specific strategies are used well to guide the learning and to engage the pupils in reviewing their progress. The core targets in the individual education plans, however, are not specific enough or sufficiently measurable. There is a need for greater consistency in the setting and reviewing of both the core and the subject-specific targets to enable progress to be more systematically monitored and measured.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils in the education centre for physically disabled to access a broad range of subjects both in the centre and alongside their mainstream peers. A key feature of the provision is the multi-disciplinary approach to assessing, planning for and delivering effective individual learning programmes which prioritise the holistic needs, personal choices and interests of all pupils. Highly skilled classroom assistants, throughout the school, support well the pupils' needs, ensuring that they enjoy, engage in and make good progress in their learning.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development planning process is informed to good effect by rigorous analysis of a range of data and is devised in consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors. The identified priorities and associated action plans focus sharply on effecting improvement in the pupils' learning experiences and their attainment. A well-embedded culture of accountability, at all levels, is evident within the school and approaches to self-evaluation are in the main thorough and comprehensive.
- The senior leadership of the school provides highly effective strategic direction, modelling high standards of professionalism and inspiring confidence and respect throughout the school community. Staff expertise is insightfully deployed and innovative, collegial approaches to professional development continue to build further the capacity of the staff to deliver high quality educational provision for the pupils.
- Middle leaders are highly capable and lead their respective areas of responsibility with enthusiasm and competence. A significant strength in the leadership of the school is the rolling seconded senior leader post, which provides a middle leader with the opportunity to develop professionally while contributing to whole school improvement at strategic level.
- The governors are highly committed to the school and take pride in the academic and the wider achievements of the pupils. Through open and regular communication with the principal and the leadership team, the governors have a very good insight into the life and work of the school; they exercise appropriately their support and challenge function. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the Inspectorate evaluation is that the school and wider community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils report that they feel safe and secure in school; they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being and are confident that any concerns are dealt with promptly.

8. Overall effectiveness

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Examination performance and other statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2012-13 to 2014-15

Based on data held by the school in SIMS³ and verified with ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in St Mark's High School achieving five or more GCSEs (A* to C and A* to E) and equivalent subjects, and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category⁴.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

<i>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	83.1	85.3	57.7
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁵</i>	<i>61.2</i>	<i>68.3</i>	<i>68</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	47.9	66	37.7
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>33.8</i>	<i>42.9</i>	<i>42.1</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	98	93	89.2
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	41	45.95	28.6

³ SIMS: School Information Management System

⁴ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

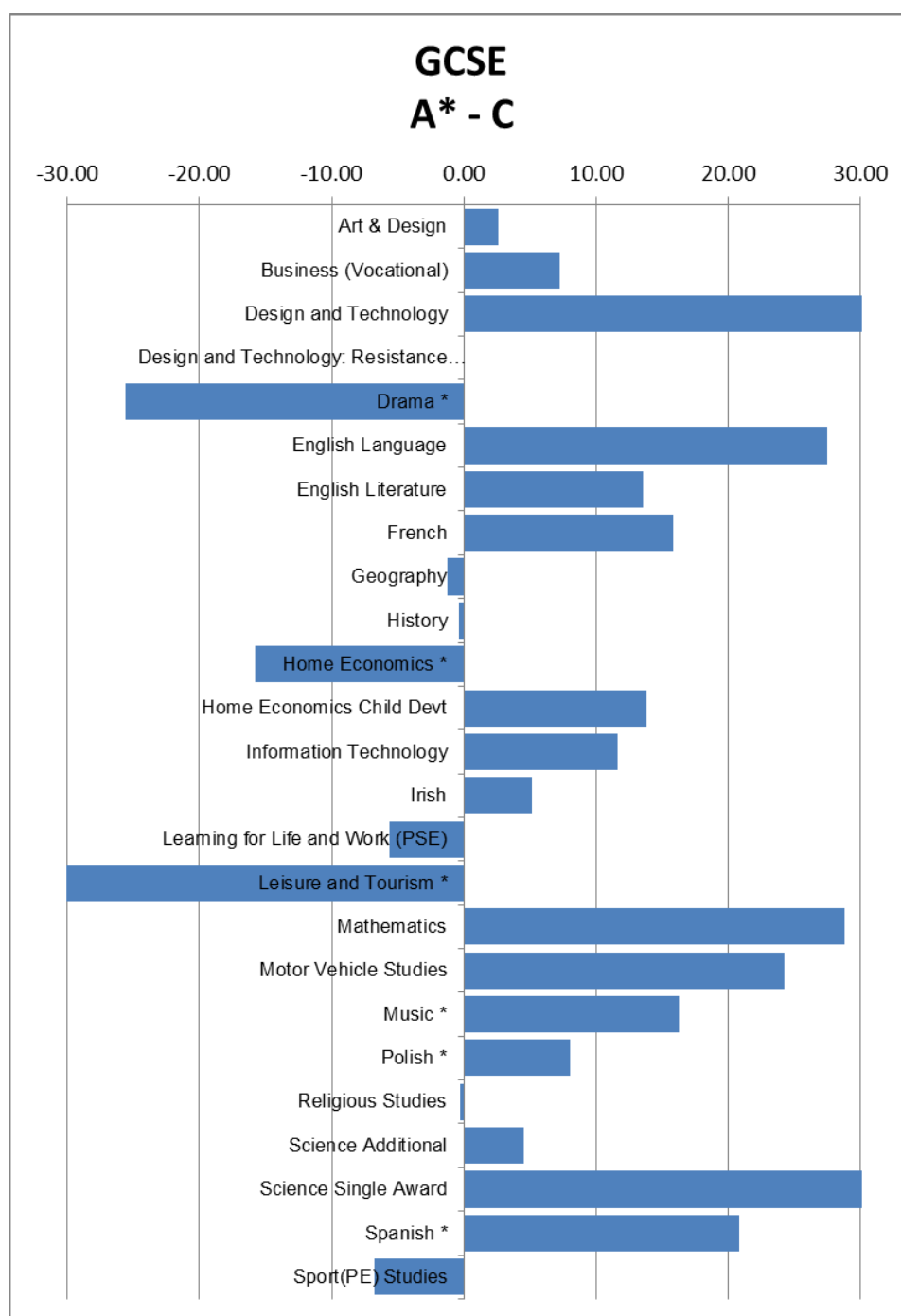
Other examination results at key stage 4

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with ETI, the tables below show the percentage of year 12 pupils in St Mark's High School achieving in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison.

Level 2	2013	2014	2015	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
BTEC Applied Science	100	100	100	257
BTEC Construction	100	100	100	36
BTEC Engineering	100	100	100	15
Occupational Studies	79.69	77.7	68.4	184
Essential Skills: Application of Number	100	100	100	88
Essential Skills: Communication	100		100	36
OCR National ICT Level 2	100	96.37		262

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A* to C from 2012-13 to 2014-15

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of year 12 pupils achieving at GCSE level at grades A* to C in individual subjects in St Mark's High School is compared with the three-year NI average for similar non-selective schools. A positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

GCE A level examination results at grades A* to C from 2012-13 to 2014-15

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in St Mark's High School achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C, and two or more GCE A levels at grades A* to E.

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2013	2014	2015
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	94.2	97.7	92.2
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	51.9	52.3	51.6
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	97.73	95.3

Other examination results: post-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with ETI, the tables below show the percentage of year 14 pupils in St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint achieving grades A* to C and A* to E in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison.

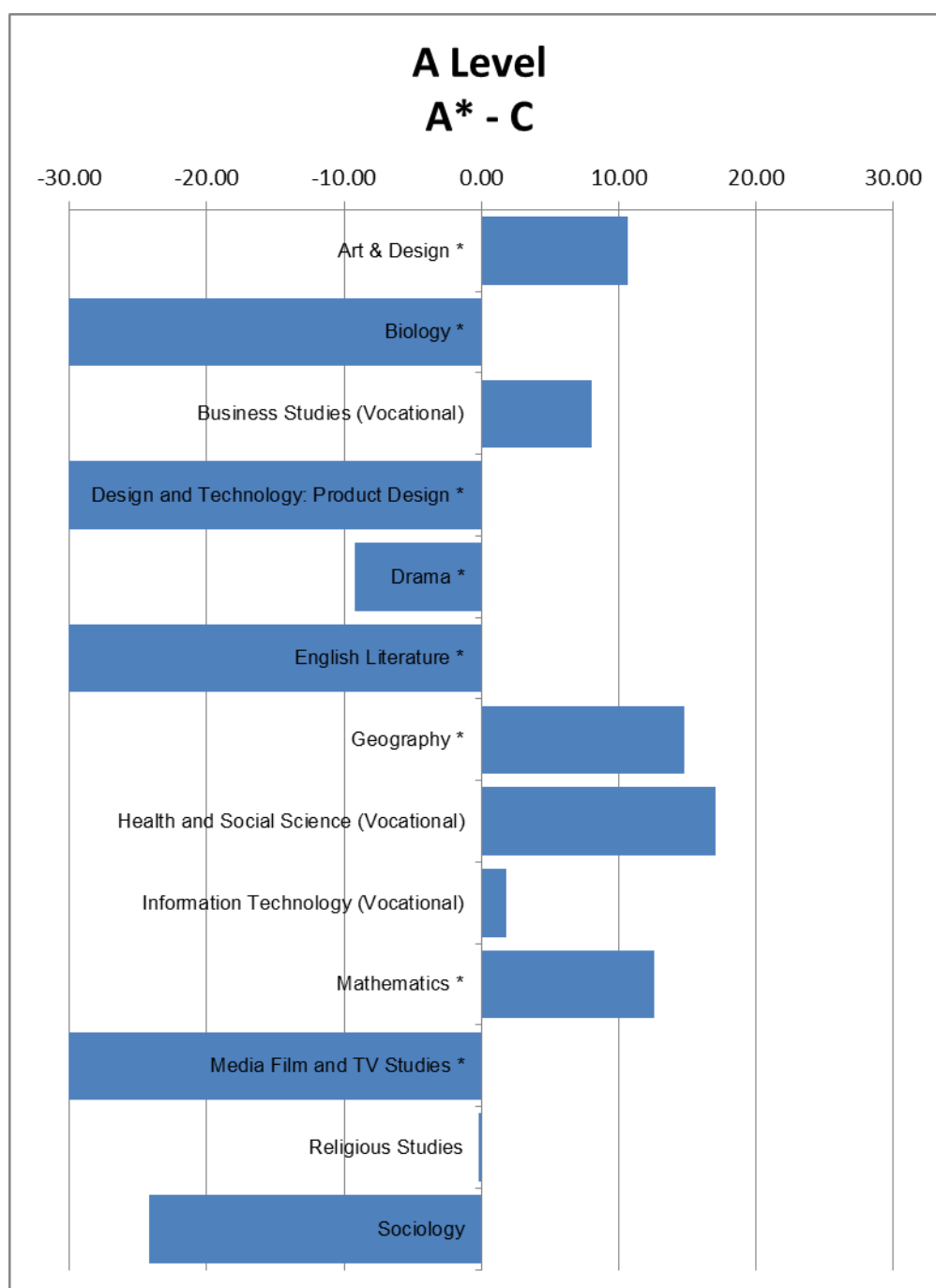
OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: POST-16

Other [level 3] courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

Level 3	2013	2014	2015	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
BTEC Sport & Exercise Science	90	100	94.1	32
BTEC Children's Care Learning & Development	100	100	100	7

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level at grades A* to C

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCE level at grades A* to C in individual subjects in St Mark's High School is compared with the three-year NI average. A positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.



*indicates fewer than 20 entries over 3 years

Staying on rate

Based on data held in SIMS by the school and verified with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at St Mark's High School from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for all schools from school census returns to DE for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	52.9	45.3
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	79.5	100

Leavers' destinations

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from St Mark's High School who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-selective schools, as appropriate.

	2013/14 NI	2013/14 School	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Total number of leavers	13187	139			
Employment	8.8%	4.3%			
Further Education	46.2%	38.1%	17	31	5
Higher Education	21.2%	21.6%			30
Work-based learning	16.9%	20.9%			
Unemployed	3.6%	0.7%			
Unknown	3.6%	14.4%			

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